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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4148
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2637
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 0034
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4976

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/12/2016
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [KN](#)
SUBJECT: NORTH KOREAN ASYLUM SEEKERS APPROACH UNHCR

REF: A. PARKER/PETTIT E-MAIL 1/4/07
[1](#)B. STATE 203879

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Alice G. Wells.
Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#)1. (S) XXXXXXXXXXXX told us January 12 that XXXXXXXXXXXX was aware of seven North Korean asylum seekers in Moscow. XXXXXXXXXXXX said XXXXXXXXXXXX had passed this information during a January 10 meeting with XXXXXXXXXXXX. The seven are laborers who had been working in a timber camp in the Russian Far East, according to Chun. XXXXXXXXXXXX has scheduled interviews for them January 18. They are currently in Moscow, and they are being cared for by XXXXXXXXXXXX who has previously facilitated contacts between UNHCR and other North Korean asylum seekers. Thus far, UNHCR has not approached the Russian government about this group and does not believe they are in imminent danger.

[1](#)2. (S) XXXXXXXXXXXX said that XXXXXXXXXXXX had specifically asked XXXXXXXXXXXX whether resettlement to the United States was an option. XXXXXXXXXXXX responded to XXXXXXXXXXXX that the chief concern was the safety of the asylum seekers and their rapid departure from Russia, which had made South Korea the best alternative in the past, according to XXXXXXXXXXXX. We emphasized that the U.S. was willing to accept UNHCR referrals of North Koreans and that this should be presented as an option. XXXXXXXXXXXX agreed to do so.

[1](#)3. (S) COMMENT: Based on XXXXXXXXXXXX involvement, we believe this is the group in ref A. The GOR has always indicated that it would consider the possibility of facilitating resettlement to the U.S. if a specific case arose, and as long as it was handled quietly. If the North Koreans are declared refugees and seek resettlement in the U.S., this would be the first time we would be able to raise specific cases with the GOR. We will follow up with UNHCR to ensure that U.S. resettlement is presented as an option, as noted in ref B. Further details will be reported as they develop. END COMMENT.
RUSSELL